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### High-intensity interval training using whole-body exercises

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**High intensity interval training using whole body exercises:  
training recommendations and methological overview**

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High intensity interval training using whole body exercises: training  
recommendations and methological overview

Short title: High intensity interval training and whole body

**ABSTRACT**

HIIT whole body (HWB) based exercise is a new calisthenics exercise program approach that can be considered an effective and safe method to improve physical fitness and body composition. HWB is a method that can be applied to different populations and ages. The purpose of this paper is to describe possible methodologies for performing physical training based on whole body exercise in healthy subjects. The HWB sessions consist of a repeated stimulus based on high intensity exercise that also include monitoring time to effort, time to recuperation and session time. The exercise intensity is related to the maximal number of movements possible in a given time, therefore the exercise sessions can be characterized as maximal. The intensity can be recorded by using ratings of perceived exertion. Weekly training frequency and exercise selection should be structured according to individual subject functional fitness. Using this simple method, there is potential for greater adherence to physical activity which can promote health benefits to all members of society.

**Key Words:** high-intensity, whole body training, interval training, exercise, all out load.

**INTRODUCTION**

The performance of physical exercise by utilizing body weight was practice by the ancient Romans, as a form of military preparation. However, the use of an individual's whole-body exercise while performing physical activity was not integrated into physical education until 1785 (Azevedo and Santos, 2015).

In 1829, the Swiss physical trainer Clias published a book entitled Kallisthenie - Exercises for Beauty and Strength, which featured calisthenics as rhythmically practiced exercises with the use of body weight (Alija and Torre, 2015). Later, the Swedes generated a table with groups of organized exercises according to specific objectives, and they suggested the use of daily training sessions (Alija and Torre, 2015).

Regarding the use of an individual's body weight as the training load, some researchers (Gist et al. 2015; Gist et al. 2014; MacRae et al. 2012) reintroduced the concept of training with body weight by using a high-intensity interval training (HIIT) method in their experiments, and they characterized this method as whole-body training (MacRae et al. 2012). This method is also known as whole-body calisthenics (Gist et al. 2015; Gist et al. 2014).

In this newly proposed form of calisthenics (Gist et al. 2015; Gist et al. 2014; MacRae et al. 2012), training with body weight was performed in professional practice by using simple conventional variables available in the literature. These included, intensity, modality and duration of work, intensity and duration of relief, number and duration of sets, time and number of intervals between sets, recovery intensity and duration are used to HIIT prescription (Buchheit et al. 2013a). According to Buchheit et al. (2013a) the manipulation of each variable in isolation has a direct impact on metabolic, cardiopulmonary and neuromuscular adaptations observed. In contrast, the manipulation of more than one parameter results in greater difficulty to predict outcomes due to complex interaction of inter-related parameters. These factors include the use of high-intensity supramaximal stimuli (Germano et al. 2015), a stimulation time between 10 seconds and 1 minute (MacRae et al. 2012), and a recovery interval of 10 seconds to 2 minutes (Buchheit et al. 2013a), resulting in a total session time of between 4 to 30 minutes (Gibala et al. 2014).

HIIT became known as an effective and safe tool for increased conditioning in both athletes and non-athletes (Gibala et al. 2014; Gibala et al. 2010; Osawa et al. 2014; Rozenek et al. 2016). The sessions consist of repeated high-intensity stimuli followed by a short recovery time, which can be performed using ergometers, such as

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3 a static bike or treadmill (Gibala et al. 2014; Rozenek et al. 2016) or by using  
4 individual body weight (Gist et al. 2015; Gist et al. 2014; MacRae et al. 2012).

5  
6 According to Gray et al. (2016) HIIT using the whole body as the resistive force  
7 could be considered as practical and low cost compared to traditional HIIT that utilizes  
8 specialized equipment that is frequently used in a laboratory or gym-based situation.  
9 Additionally, whole body exercise may be performed indoor or outdoor, an important  
10 characteristic when we consider individual preferences related to gymnasium  
11 membership, the costs involved and the training environment. However, the efficient  
12 application of HIIT requires a considerable theoretical and practical approach by the  
13 professional during the preparation of the training program, especially monitoring the  
14 variable load during the training session (Tucker et al. 2015;).

15  
16 No previous reports have described a safe strategy for controlling the training  
17 load in this form of exercise. However, variables such as the stimulus time, recovery  
18 time, and total session time can be manipulated so that the individual can perform the  
19 greatest number of stimuli at the requested intensity, regardless of fitness level  
20 (Buchheit et al. 2013 a ).

21  
22 From this perspective, it is possible that the load used during the all-out method,  
23 which is characterized as the maximum possible intensity during the stimulus period as  
24 proposed by the published protocol (Gibala et al. 2008), can easily be manipulated.  
25 This can be accomplished by increasing or decreasing the stimulus or recovery times  
26 during the training cycles according to different practitioner profiles (beginner,  
27 intermediate, and advanced). In addition, other variables, such as the total time and  
28 selection of exercises to be performed during the training session, are important for the  
29 success of properly prescribed HIIT whole body training (MacRae et al. 2012; Buchheit  
30 et al. 2013<sup>a</sup>).

31  
32 A consensus does not exist in the literature regarding how to handle the training  
33 loads during the HIIT whole body session; further, sufficient evidence to guide the  
34 implementation of an adequate training program is lacking. Thus, the purpose of this  
35 document is to present possible strategies for prescribing the training load variables  
36 based on the HIIT whole body training exercise.

## 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 **METHODS**

52 An extensive literature search was performed using PubMed and MEDLINE.  
53 Searches were performed for 'HIIT', 'whole-body training', 'resistance training',  
54 'exercise', 'whole-body calisthenics', 'calisthenics exercise', 'high-intensity interval  
55 training', and combinations of the aforementioned keywords. The publications obtained  
56 were screened for studies that included healthy humans. Studies on HIIT whole body  
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were preferentially included. In their absence, HIIT studies focusing on body fat loss or fitness were used. Due to a lack of studies found specifically on natural HIIT whole body during manuscript preparation, and the relative broad nature of this review, a narrative style was chosen (Helms et al. 2015).

**TIME AND TRAINING LOAD VARIABLES**

An increasing body of evidence suggests that HIIT induces physiological adaptations that are superior (Germano et al. 2015; Buchheit et al. 2013 a ; Rozenek et al. 2016) or similar to conventional continuous training (De Feop et al. 2013; Gillen et al. 2016; Keating et al. 2014).

The majority of studies in the literature (Osawa et al. 2014; Rozenek et al. 2016; Gibala et al. 2008; Tabata et al. 1997; Tucker et al. 2015) that employed the traditional HIIT method traditionally used treadmills, or cycle ergometers, and incorporated stimulus and recovery times ranging from 10 seconds to 4 minutes. Exercise session times were recorded to be between 4 to 28 minutes duration.

According to previous studies (Rozenek et al. 2016; Gray et al. 2016; Gibala et al. 2008; Tabata et al. 1997; Tucker et al. 2015), the overall duration of the HIIT training session can vary between 4 and 32 minutes. In addition, this time-frame has been established in the literature to be sufficient for promoting favorable adaptations to weight loss and increased physical fitness quickly and efficiently (McRae et al. 2012; Buchheit et al. 2013 a ; Gibala et al. 2014; Gibala et al. 2010; Rozenek et al. 2016). However, exercise protocols applied to HIIT whole body training are still sparse in the literature, limiting the applicability of this modality.

Another important component of physical training programs is the training load (Pinho et al. 2016). Conceptually, the training load consists of the stimuli that make up the training session; moreover, this parameter is considered an important variable for controlling the exercise, and it may be monitored internally and externally (Mazurek, 2016; Borin et al. 2007; Borin et al. 2008).

The external load is considered the work performed during training (Mazurek et al. 2016; Pinho et al. 2016; Borin et al. 2008) and is directly related to the volume and intensity of the exercise variables during HIIT. The training load can be characterized as follows: the number of stimuli and total training time (volume) and the intensity of the stimulus and recovery time (intensity). However, the internal training load corresponds to the acute physiological responses induced by the exercise (Pinho et al. 2016). The adaptation to the training stimulus will be greater as the internal load is increased (Impellizzeri et al. 2006).

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3 The main variables of adaptation are; heart rate during exercise, recovery heart  
4 rate and blood lactate concentrations post exercise (Pinho et al. 2016; Borin et al.  
5 2007; Borin et al. 2008; Impellizzeri et al. 2006).

6  
7 In conventional HITT protocols, the main internal load parameters used in the  
8 literature (Borin et al. 2007; Borin et al. 2008; Impellizzeri et al. 2006) correspond to  
9 effort perception, heart rate, and VO<sub>2</sub>max. With regard to monitoring the external load,  
10 conventional HITT protocols have traditionally considered the stimulation time and  
11 recovery time as the training load indicators (Tabata et al. 1997).

12  
13 In addition, the proportion of the recovery time relative to the time effort and the  
14 total length of the training session have been widely used for monitoring (Buchheit et  
15 al. 2013 a ; Tucker et al. 2015; Buchheit et al. 2013 b ). In this type of monitoring, the  
16 following loads have been applied: 1:1, in which the stimulus and recovery times are  
17 similar (Osawa et al. 2014; Rozenek et al. 2016); 1:1/2, in which the recovery time is  
18 half the time of the stimulus (Tabata et al. 1997), resulting in a training session with  
19 greater intensity but shorter duration; and 1:2, where the recovery time is twice the  
20 stimulus time, which allows for greater recovery during the training session.

21  
22 Another important point to consider is that recovery time following a HIIT session,  
23 could have active or passive component (Dourado et al. 2004; Fujita et al. 2009;  
24 Abderrahman et al. 2013). Fujita et al. (2009) found no differences in power between  
25 sprint sessions when active and passive recovery sessions were used. However,  
26 differences were found in VO<sub>2</sub> max and heart rate when active recovery was used  
27 when compared with a passive recovery protocol. In addition, the active recovery  
28 sessions were more efficient than passive recovery in promoting maintenance of heart  
29 rate, oxygen consumption and removal of blood lactate (Abderrahman et al. 2013).

30  
31 Although the training load control for HIIT whole body has not yet been fully  
32 clarified, we recommend that the applied load be characterized as all out, where the  
33 scores of effort perception of the adapted Borg scale (Tiggemann et al. 2010) are  
34 between 9 and 10 for each stimulus during all training cycles. The cycles are equal to  
35 the product of the sum of the stimulation time with the time of recovery, as described in  
36 Figure 1; this method was previously used in conventional HIIT training (Buchheit et al.  
37 2013 a ; Buchheit et al. 2013 b).

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INSERT FIGURE 1

Only three studies (Gist et al. 2015; Gist et al. 2014; MacRae et al. 2012)  
relating to HIIT whole body have been published, and these studies suggest that this  
method produces positive changes including; improved fitness, decreased body fat,  
and increased muscle strength and endurance. By using the protocol proposed by



Tabata et al. (1997), McRae et al. (2012) reported improvement in both the VO<sub>2</sub>peak at the time of fatigue and body weight. Gist et al. (2014) and Gist et al. (2015) used a methodological proposal of 4 to 7 cycles of 30 seconds of exercise with 4 minutes of recovery, and both studies showed an improvement in VO<sub>2</sub>peak.

Given the observations with the training load control in conventional HIIT, we can consider that manipulating the stimulus time (ST), recovery time (RT), and total training time (TT) variables (Figure 1) are also crucial for the physiological adaptations during the session of HIIT whole body. However, we have found no published studies with suggested guidelines for the training load ratio or how this load ratio should be managed in the training program, for HIIT whole body, according to the profile of the practitioner.

**EXERCISE SELECTION AND WEEKLY FREQUENCY**

The exercise selection used on whole body exercise traditionally is based on callisthenic sessions, recently, Anthony and Brown (2016) proposed the following exercise classification: power stabilization (CORE) and support. In this proposal for training, the importance of the selection of exercises in the developmental phase of conditioning was essential because it allowed coaches to maximize performance and reduce sports-related injuries (Anthony and Brown, 2016). Rozenek et al. (2016) also proposed a system of training in which a positive overall result was achieved in the performance of individuals using the training program. McRae et al. (2012) used four free exercises in his study (burpee, jumping jack, mountain climber, and squat thrust); however, the criteria for choosing both the exercises and the order of the selected exercises were not described.

Considering the criteria for selecting and order of the exercises, we recommend that the adjustments used for strength training be considered. Numerous previous studies (Gil et al. 2011; Janning et al. 2009; Pauletto, 1986; Santos et al. 2009; Simão et al. 2007; Simão et al. 2005) have shown that exercise selection should be considered as a critical parameter in neuromuscular adaptations; therefore, it is arguable that the choice of exercises can significantly affect the dynamic training session.

While no guidelines exist for the criteria for selecting the exercises in HIIT whole body, we suggest that the complexity of the motor task be considered a viable strategy when organizing the training session. According to the motor control point of view (Semenick et al. 1987), we can classify the exercises into two distinct groups:

- With a unique movement pattern, jumping Jack (Figure 2A).
- With a unique movement combined, burpee (Figure 2B)

## INSERT FIGURE 2

Performing exercises that are more complex requires greater energy expenditure (Pauleto, 1986; Simão et al. 2007) and increases metabolic demand (De Aguiar et al. 2013; Fernandez-Fernandez et al. 2015) and can therefore affect the dynamics of the training session, from the quality of movements, associated with greater or lesser fatigability and to the total energy expenditure during the exercise (Amorin and Faria, 2012; De Aguiar et al. 2013; Fernandez-Fernandez et al. 2015; Garcia et al. 2013).

Despite the performance of numerous studies on the physiological impact of HIIT, gaps in scientific evidence still exist regarding the practical application of HIIT whole body. These gaps include the cost effectiveness for fitness programs, as suggested by Gray et al. (2016), as well as guidelines for handling exercise session variables such as load control, session length, weekly frequency, and exercise selection.

In relation to weekly frequency, to the best of our knowledge there are few studies (Dalleck et al. 2010, Hatle et al. 2014) that have investigated the impact of weekly HIIT frequency on training parameters. Dalleck et al. (2010) demonstrated improvements in lactate threshold, however, a dose-response relationship between frequency of interval training and the magnitude of lactate threshold improvement occurred at a sprint training frequency of only 1- 2 days/week. Hatle et al. (2014) comparing a moderate (4x/week) and high (8x/week) frequency using treadmill training found improvements in VO<sub>2</sub> max in both protocols. However, a delay in adaptation was noted in the high frequency group, which may have been related to recovery, or exercise and rest ratio during the activity. Further studies are required to investigate this finding.

Therefore, based on the published data, we propose a basic guideline for the preparation of a HIIT whole body program, using a maximal system (Table 1). This system is based on control of the external training loads through the stimulus, time recovery cycles, overall training time in the session, and selection of exercises. The internal load is monitored through perceived exertion, with scores ranging from 9 to 10 on the scale adapted to the level of physical fitness and the motor experience of the practitioner.

## INSERT TABLE 1

Our proposal is based on a total fixed training time (30 minutes) for different practitioner profiles and on the effort time for each fixed cycle (30 seconds), but with total time of stimuli during session for different profiles (beginners = 10 minutes, intermediate = 15 minutes and advanced = 20 minutes). The intensity of each stimulus is maximal, regardless of the practitioner profile, but the recovery time varies according to the HIIT whole body practitioner profile, which takes into account the relationship of the training load. Therefore, beginners have a ratio with lower physiological impact (1:2), intermediates have a greater load pattern (1:1), and advanced practitioners have a load ratio that is much more intense (1:1/2), as shown in Figure 3. In addition, another important point in our proposal is the alternation between exercises characterized as simple (less fatigue) and complex (greater fatigue) in order to better develop the training program for intermediate profile training.

INSERT FIGURE 3

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

HIIT is an effective training method for enhancing fitness and weight loss. Given these known adaptations due to HIIT whole body training, we recommend the use of training load by manipulating the stimulus time variables, recovery time, and choice of exercises according to the practitioner profile. We also recommend, monitoring intensity by using perceived exertion with scores ranging from 9 to 10. Regarding quantification of load, as shown in Table 1, we recommend 3 cycles per week for beginners and 4 to 5 cycles per week for intermediate and advanced practitioners. In intermediate individuals, exercises characterized as simple and complex can be applied, and we recommend switching between a simple exercise and a complex exercise during training; other exercises that can be incorporated in the training session are shown in Figure 3.

The HIIT whole body is an effective and safe method to improve conditioning and also for those seeking weight loss. The work methodology allows it to be carried out in any environment that is specific for training or not, such as: gyms, clubs, parks, studios, and even at home. Finally, we believe that the proposed methodology is simple and can generate greater adherence to physical activity to promote health in all types of individuals from a variety of backgrounds and abilities.

**CONCLUSION**

Considering the evidence available in the literature we suggest that HIIT whole body training is an alternative strategy that needs consideration for use to improve parameters that are used to measure adaptations to physical training. These parameters include, time to exhaustion, time to recuperation and session time. All subjects engaging in HIIT should be encouraged to perform a maximal number of movements possible, in the prescribed time period, and the effort needs to be characterized as maximal. The intensity of the efforts can be controlled by monitoring the rating of perceived exertion. Finally, the weekly frequency and exercise selection should be related to the functional fitness of the individuals, and should also be subject specific.

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**FIGURE LEGENDS**

Figure 1 - Distribution of loads of time on HIIT. ST: stimulation time; RT: recovery time; TT: Total training time in the session.

Figure 2. Classification of according to the complexity of the motor gesture exercises. (A): Exercise jump jack; (B): burpee exercise.

Figure 3. Classification of according to the complexity of the motor gesture exercises.

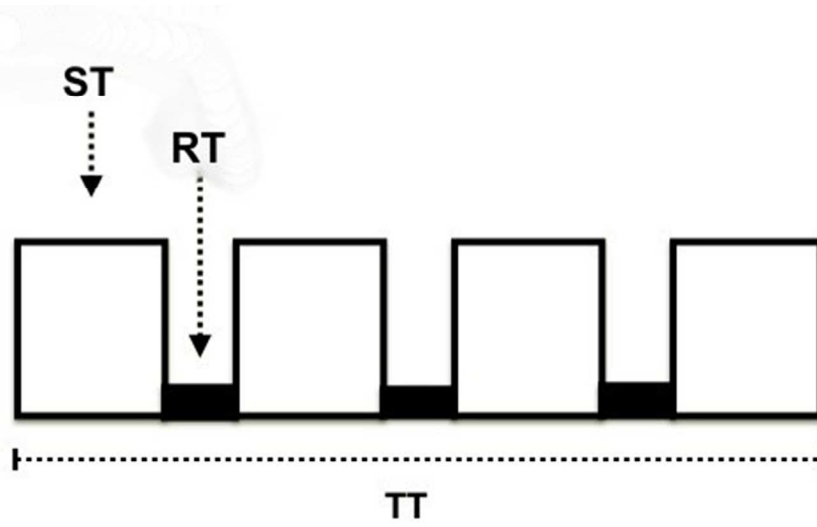


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**Table 1.** Proposal for HIIT whole body, with different levels of fitness.

Parameters	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
Exercise selection	Pattern	Pattern and combined	Combined
Frequency (days per week)	2-3	3-4	5
<i>External load</i>			
Effort time (sec)	30"	30"	30"
Recovery time (sec)	60"	30"	15"
Session time (sec)	30"	30"	30"
Movement amount*	Maximal	Maximal	Maximal
<i>Internal load</i>			
RPE (score)	9-10	9-10	9-10





\*Maximal number of movements during efforts time. RPE: *rating of perceived exertion* scale (0-10).



120x65mm (121 x 121 DPI)



10x5mm (600 x 600 DPI)

Exercise	Classification
<div>Squat</div> <div></div>	Pattern
<div>Split</div> <div></div>	Pattern
<div>Squat jump</div> <div></div>	Combined
<div>Split squat</div> <div></div>	Combined

16x15mm (600 x 600 DPI)